

Remarks at the Harry S. Truman Library Institute Legacy of Leadership Dinner October 25, 1995

Thank you very much, Clifton, for that very fine introduction, and I hope that what you said is true about both of us. President Ford, President Carter, thank you for your service to our Nation and for what you said and for the work you have done to continue America's mission since you have left office; the work you have done in supporting our common efforts in expanding trade; and for that very unusual trip President Carter took to Haiti not very long ago, which has now given them one year of freedom and democracy. Thank you, sir, for that.

Vice President Gore; General and Mrs. Dawson; my good friend Lindy Boggs; Mr. and Mrs. Hackman; Senator and Mrs. Nunn; Governor and Mrs. Carlin; Mr. Symington; David and Rosalee McCullough; Congresswoman McCarthy; the other Members of Congress who are here. I always love to be at events honoring Harry Truman because I come from a family that was for him when he was alive. *[Laughter]*

I loved hearing the story about the—that President Ford told about the tour President Truman gave of the White House. You know, President Truman oversaw the last great renovation of the White House, although many fine things have been done within the house by subsequent Presidents and their wives. And he gave us the Truman Balcony, and fated almost as much heat for that as he did some of the more famous things he did. Every first family since then has thanked their lucky stars for Harry Truman's persistence in hanging on to the Truman Balcony.

It was my great honor, along with the First Lady, who had the privilege of hosting many of you at the White House today, to have Mr. Daniel's parents come to dinner. Margaret Truman Daniel was uncommonly kind to my wife and to my daughter during the course of the '92 campaign and on occasion thereafter. And we wanted to have them for dinner. And as we were having dinner in the Family Dining Room upstairs, which used to be the room in which Margaret Truman had her piano and did her practicing—it was her room—and President and Mrs. Kennedy converted it into the Family

Dining Room, and for the first time in 160 years, the First Family no longer had to go downstairs to dinner at night. And I thought this was quite a great thing, you know, and so I thought we should have dinner in this room with the beautiful Revolutionary wallpaper that Mrs. Kennedy put up.

And we got sort of into the dinner. We were having a wonderful conversation; I was marveling at how much Margaret Truman reminded me of her father. And so, as the conversation warmed, I said, "Tell me, Margaret, how do you like this Family Dining Room?" And she got a very stern look in her face, and she said, "Well, Mr. President, I like you." But she said, "You know, I just don't think people should eat on the same floor they sleep." *[Laughter]* And I thought to myself, the Trumans are still speaking their mind. *[Laughter]* And thank God for that.

I have been asked to talk about the meaning of Harry Truman's legacy for today and tomorrow. And because of the meetings that I have just had at the United Nations and the work that we are doing 50 years after its beginning, I thought it might be worth my sharing with you a few thoughts about Harry Truman's legacy and what it means for today and tomorrow.

Every American President, including my two distinguished predecessors who spoke here tonight, has followed in Harry Truman's footsteps in carrying forward America's leadership in the world. This tradition of sustained American leadership and involvement has been so successful and has been so consistently maintained by Democratic and Republican Presidents alike that some of us forget what a bold departure it was.

Just before I came here tonight I was with Prime Minister Rabin at another meeting talking about peace in the Middle East. Harry Truman was the first world leader to recognize the State of Israel. And his commitment to giving us the capacity to lead and work for peace started a single silver thread that runs right through the terrific accomplishments of President Carter and all of the things which have been done since. But we forget what a bold departure it was. The Truman doctrine, the Marshall plan, the

NATO alliance, each was a step unlike anything before.

Indeed, NATO, which President Truman rightly considered one of his finest achievements, was our very first peacetime alliance ever. We never had a military alliance in peacetime before NATO. This decisive change grew out of the belief that was shared by General Marshall, Senator Vandenberg, and Dean Acheson and so many others that we could never again remain apart from the world. We had, after all, isolated ourselves after the First World War, and because of that, we had to fight another. Harry Truman was determined that would not happen again. And he had to face, almost immediately, the chilling prospect of the cold war and to make all of the decisions which set in motion the policies which enabled, ultimately, freedom to prevail in that war.

He had to do it with a nation that was weary from war and weary from engagement, where people were longing to just focus on the little everyday things of life that mean the most to most of us. But because he did it, we just celebrated 50 years of the United Nations. No more world war, no nuclear device ever dropped again, and we see the movement for peace and freedom and democracy all over the world.

What are we going to do to build on his achievement? What do we have to do to secure a peace for the next century? Freedom's new gains, I believe, make it possible for us to help to build a Europe that is democratic, that is peaceful, and that, for the first time since nation-states appeared on that continent, is undivided.

We can build a Europe committed to freedom, democracy, and prosperity, genuinely secure throughout the continent and allied with other like-minded people throughout the world for the first time ever. And I am committed to doing what we can to build that kind of Europe based on three principles: First, to support democracy in Europe's newly free nations; second, to work to increase economic vitality in Europe with America and other partners through open markets and expanded trade and to help the former Communist countries complete their transition to market economies, a move that will strengthen democracy there and help to block the advance of ultranationalism and ethnic hatred; and finally, we're building the transatlantic community of tomorrow by

deepening, not withdrawing, from our security cooperation.

Today, with the overarching threat of communism gone, the faces of hatred and intolerance are still there with different faces: ethnic and religious conflicts, organized crime and drug dealing, state-sponsored terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction. America cannot insulate itself from these threats any more than they could insulate themselves after World War II. Indeed, we have less option to do so because the world is becoming a global village.

By joining with our allies and embracing others who share our values, we can't insulate ourselves from these threats, but we can sure create a better defense. NATO's success gives us proof of what we can do when we work together. NATO binds the Western democracies in a common purpose with shared values. And I strongly believe that NATO does not depend upon an ever-present enemy to maintain its unity or its usefulness.

The alliance strengthens all of its members from within and defends them from threats without. If you just compare the stability, the economic strength, the harmony in Western Europe today with the conditions that existed just a few decades ago in President Truman's time, you can see that. The alliance has brought former foes together, strengthened democracy, and along with the Marshall plan, it sheltered fragile economies and got them going again. It gave countries confidence to look past their ancient hatreds. It gave them the safety to sow the prosperity they enjoy today.

By establishing NATO, of course, America also did something even more important from our point of view. We established the security that we require to flourish and to grow. Now we have to build upon President Truman's accomplishments. He said when he announced the Truman doctrine, "The world is not static. The status quo is not sacred. We have to adapt NATO, and I believe we should open NATO's doors to new members." The end of the cold war cannot mean the end of NATO, and it cannot mean a NATO frozen in the past, because there is no other cornerstone for an integrated, secure, and stable Europe for the future.

NATO's success has involved promoting security interests, advancing values, supporting democracy and economic opportunity. We have literally created a community of shared values and shared interests as well as an alliance for

the common defense. Now the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union want to be a part of enlarging the circle of common purpose and, in so doing, increasing our own security.

That's why we established the Partnership For Peace. In less than 2 years, we've brought 26 nations into a program to create confidence and friendship, former enemies now joining in field exercises throughout the year, building bonds together instead of battle plans against one another. This has been good for us and good for Europe.

Now those nations in the region that maintain their democracies and continue to promote economic reform and behave responsibly should be able to become members of NATO. That will give them the confidence to consolidate their freedom and to build their economies and to make us more secure.

NATO's completed a study of how it should bring on new members. We intend to move carefully and deliberately and openly and share the conclusions of that study with all of those who have joined us in the Partnership For Peace. But we have to move to the next phase in a steady, careful way, to consider who the new members should be and when they would be invited to join the alliance. Throughout this, I will engage with the Congress and the American people and seek the kind of bipartisan partnership that made Harry Truman's important work possible.

Let me emphasize one important point: Bringing new members into this alliance will enhance, not undermine, the security of everyone in Europe, including Russia, Ukraine, the other former Soviet republics. We've assured Russia that NATO is as it has always been, a defensive alliance. Extending the zone of security and democracy in Europe can help to prevent new conflicts that have been building up, in many cases, for centuries. For Russia and all of her neighbors, this is a better path than the alternative.

I also want you to know, as you saw from the laughing photograph with President Yeltsin, we are still building a positive relationship with Russia. Those of you familiar with the history of that great country know that its heroic effort to become a confident and stable democracy is one of the most significant developments of our time.

One of our former colleagues, President Nixon, who is no longer with us, wrote me a letter about Russia a month to the day before he died, which I still have and reread from time to time, emphasizing the extraordinary historic significance of Russia's courageous reach for democracy and liberty.

Russia, too, has a contribution to make in the new Europe, and we have offered them a strong alliance with NATO and working through the Partnership For Peace. Let me just tell you, that partnership is going to deepen. Tomorrow, United States and Russian armed forces will begin a peacekeeping exercise together at Fort Riley, Kansas, under the auspices of the Partnership For Peace. We want our relationships with them to be daily, comprehensive, routine. We want to go every step of the way to build confidence and security and a democratic Russia. But we don't think NATO's opening to the East and our relationship with Russia are mutually exclusive choices.

I want to emphasize one other thing. NATO is at work for us right now, as we speak, demonstrating in Bosnia how vital it is to securing the peace in Europe. The efforts of our negotiators, the military changes on the ground, and NATO's air strikes have brought these parties to the negotiating table and to an agreement on the basic principles of a settlement and a nationwide cease-fire.

Next week, in an historic meeting, the Presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia will travel here to Dayton, Ohio, to resolve the remaining issues. The political settlement that is taking shape will preserve Bosnia as a single state and provide for a fair territorial compromise. It will commit the parties to hold free elections, establish democratic institutions, and respect human rights.

There are many people who have played a role in bringing this process this far. I want to thank one of them tonight for his extraordinary efforts, President Carter. Thank you so much for what you have done.

I want to say to all of you, there is no guarantee of peace, but it is possible in large measure because of NATO. And let me ask you one final thing. If the peace is negotiated, NATO must be prepared to help implement the agreement. There will be no peace without an international military presence in Bosnia, a presence that must be credible. NATO is indispensable.

to this to give the parties the reassurance they need to make peace.

The question I have is this: If Harry Truman were President, would he expect the United States as the leader of NATO to be a part of the force in Bosnia? I think you know what the answer is. The answer is, yes. And so must we.

My fellow Americans, make no mistake about this: If we're not there, many of our partners will reconsider their commitments; if we're not there, America will sacrifice its leadership in NATO; if we're not there, we will be making a sad mistake. I am determined that we will be part of this NATO mission.

I am working with Congress, engaging in an important dialog. I met not very long ago with a bipartisan group of leaders, and I want to say a special word of thanks to Senator Nunn for his remarkable contribution to that meeting and for his remarkable contributions to our country, which we will all miss when he is gone.

My fellow Americans, if you want 4 years of bloody conflict to end, you have to support the United States being involved with NATO in enforcing the peace agreement. We have not sent troops into battle. We have not taken sides. We have not been a part of the UNPROFOR mission on the ground. But we must do this if you want your country and NATO to be effective in our time as it was in President Truman's vision and in his time.

Let me also say again, if we don't do this, the consequences for our country could be grave, indeed. This is the most serious conflict on the continent of Europe since World War II. NATO must help to end it. If we fail to secure this peace, how can we achieve an integrated, peaceful, and united Europe? If we fail to secure this peace, our success around the world and much of our success at home, which has come from American leadership, will be weakened. If we fail to secure this peace, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia could spread to other nations and involve our sons and daughters in a conflict in Europe.

Let me say in closing that just a few days ago, we were fortunate to have a visit in the

United States from His Holiness John Paul II. And I spent about a half an hour with him alone, and he started with the most unusual conversation I've ever had with him or, in some ways, with any other world leader. He said, "I want to talk about the world, and I want to know what you think." I said, "The world?" He said, "Yes, the whole deal." I said, "Well, where shall I start?" He said, "Start in Bosnia." So we talked about Bosnia. Then we went around the world. At the end he said, "You know, I am not a young man. I have lived through most of this century. The 20th century began with a war in Sarajevo. Mr. President, you must not let the 20th century end with a war in Sarajevo."

I ask you to think of this, my fellow Americans, that first war in Sarajevo, that was Harry Truman's war. That's the war that he joined up in even though he was old enough and his eyesight was bad enough for him to get out of it. That's the war he showed people the kind of leadership capacity he had. And our failures after that war led Franklin Roosevelt into another war, led Harry Truman to end that war with a set of difficult painful decisions, including dropping the atomic bomb, and led him to determine that it would never happen again. That's why he did all the things we celebrate tonight.

If he were here he would say, "If you want to really honor me, prepare for the future as I did."

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 p.m. in the Main Hall at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Clifton Truman Daniel, President Truman's grandson; Maj. Gen. Donald S. Dawson, USAF (Ret.), president, Harry S. Truman Library Institute for National and International Affairs, and his wife, Jenny; Lindy Boggs, dinner chair; Larry Hackman, Director, Harry S. Truman Library, and his wife, Sandi; Senator Sam Nunn and his wife, Colleen; Archivist of the United States John W. Carlin and his wife, Diana; master of ceremonies James Symington; and author and historian David McCullough and his wife, Rosalee.